Appendix 9

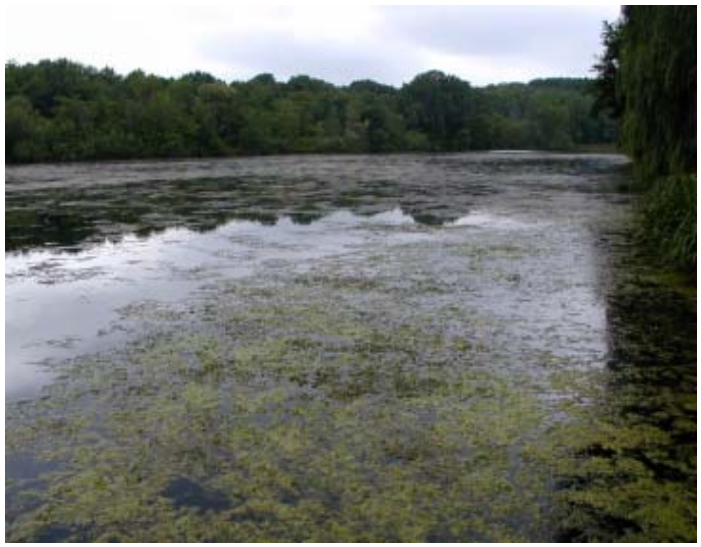
Schweitzer Dam Removal Project

FACT SHEET

What's This Project About?

The Schweitzer Dam Removal Project will transform a eutrophic and shallow impoundment formed by a dam on Cedar Creek in Washington County into a free-flowing stream and natural floodplain, open to public use. The Department of Natural Resources owns the dam, 10-acre impoundment and 8-acres of surrounding environmental corridor.

Department of Natural Resources staff are developing a plan for removing the current dam structure, restoring the stream and its natural floodplain corridor.



Schweitzer Pond in midsummer.

What About the Pond?

The pond is formed by a dam built by A. Schweitzer and Joe Merkel in 1946. Public Service Commission documents filed by Mr. Schweitzer show that he was interested in raising fish in the pond formed by his dam. Mr. Schweitzer apparently never raised fish in his pond, and the dam never served any purpose other than forming the shallow pond.

Dam built in 1946 creates the Schweitzer Pond.

Why Remove the Dam and Pond?

The Department has nothing against ponds; it's just that when dams form ponds on natural creeks, a number of things can happen:

- water slows down and heats up
- the river is fragmented by the dam and creates a barrier to fish movement
- nutrient-rich sediment settles at the pond bottom, smothering habitat preferred by resident fish and other aquatic life
- aquatic plants may grow in thick, nuisance mats
- dissolved oxygen levels rise sharply by day, and drop to critical levels by night

As a result of the changes that take place when a creek is turned into a pond, the fish and other aquatic life found in the former stream can change dramatically. Under extreme conditions, only fish and other aquatic life tolerant of dramatic dissolved oxygen swings, elevated water temperatures and degraded habitat will thrive.

Schweitzer Pond has experienced all of the changes listed above. The pond has thick mats of algae and non-native Eurasian water milfoil during the warm summer months, and the resulting fish population is dominated by tolerant carp.

Why is the State involved in this Project?

The state and other non-profit conservation groups have been very active acquiring lands or conservation easements along Cedar Creek. The quality of the creek and adjacent land both upstream and downstream of the project area are relatively undisturbed. In fact, the land upstream from the project area contains pockets of Tamarack trees, a species common to high-quality northern bogs, and a rare calcareous fen. Removal of the dam and restoration of the area would compliment past and on-going resource conservation efforts in the Cedar Creek watershed.

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Cedar Creek downstream from the Schweitzer Dam.

How Will the Public Benefit?

Restoring this portion of Cedar Creek will not only improve the quality of water and habitat for fish and wildlife species, but will also give the public the opportunity to observe the diversity of plants and animals this type of corridor has to offer.

Once the Department removes the dam, the adjacent floodplain areas will be stabilized and open to the public. There will be no "improvements" to the site such as roads or paths except as needed to allow the dam to be removed.

What Are Other Expected Benefits of this Project?

The Department anticipates many benefits following the removal of the Schweitzer Dam and pond. These benefits include:

- Improvements in the biotic integrity of Cedar Creek
- Improvements in water quality
- Enhancements to the value and function of the natural stream corridor

As an example, it appears that there is significant groundwater discharge to the creek in the area upstream and downstream of the dam and pond. Once the river becomes free-flowing and bank vegetation is established, this section of stream may be capable of supporting a cold-water fishery, including trout. According to residents in the area, brook trout and brown trout were historically present in upper Cedar Creek and its tributaries. A review of the Departments fish distribution data from the late-1970's has confirmed their observations.

What are the Steps Involved?

- Secure funding and complete draft plans.
- Complete a draft environmental assessment of the effects of dam removal
- Hold a public meeting to answer questions about the project and findings of the environmental assessment
- Finalize the environmental assessment and obtain applicable local, state and federal permits
- Remove dam and restore stream and corridor.

For More Information…

If you have questions about this project, contact one of the following:

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